

# ALL CHANGE

Numbers 20–21

Hope Church, 17 July 2011

## “Previously in Numbers...”

- ▶ Numbers 13–14
- ▶ What happened?
  - Israelites on brink of entering Canaan, but ...
  - God’s judgement was ...
  - Tried to enter anyway, but ...

- ▶ Where?
- ▶ When?



## “This week in Numbers...”

- ▶ Numbers 20–21
- ▶ Where?
- ▶ When?
- ▶ What did we miss?
- ▶ What will happen next?



## Passage overview

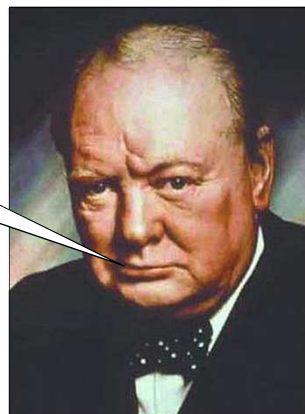
### Chapter 20

- 1 Miriam dies
- 2–13 God provides water, Moses & Aaron judged
- 14–21 Edom refuses to let Israel pass
- 22–29 Aaron dies

### Chapter 21

- 1–3 Israelites defeat Arad
- 4–9 People complain, poisonous snakes
- 10–20 Journey to Moab
- 21–31 Israelites defeat Sihon
- 32–35 Israelites defeat Og

*Now this is not the end.  
It is not even the  
beginning of the end.  
But it is, perhaps, the end  
of the beginning.*



Winston Churchill

▶ **Key transition point:**

- **Before:** Arrive at Kadesh, fail to enter Canaan, condemned to wander & die in desert for 40 years
- **Now:** Back at Kadesh 38 years later
- **After:** moving towards Canaan

## Focus on two particular events



## 1. Water from the rock (Numbers 20:2-13)

### But first

<sup>1</sup> In the first month the whole Israelite community arrived at the Desert of Zin, and they stayed at Kadesh. There Miriam died and was buried.

### Complaint (again)

<sup>2</sup> Now there was no water for the community, and the people gathered in opposition to Moses and Aaron. <sup>3</sup> They quarrelled with Moses and said, "If only we had died when our brothers fell dead before the LORD! <sup>4</sup> Why did you bring the LORD's community into this wilderness, that we and our livestock should die here? <sup>5</sup> Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to this terrible place? It has no grain or figs, grapevines or pomegranates. And there is no water to drink!"



## 1. Water from the rock (Numbers 20:2-13)

### God's solution

<sup>6</sup> Moses and Aaron went from the assembly to the entrance to the tent of meeting and fell face down, and the glory of the LORD appeared to them. <sup>7</sup> The LORD said to Moses, <sup>8</sup> "**Take the staff**, and you and your brother Aaron **gather the assembly together. Speak to that rock** before their eyes and it will pour out its water. You will bring water out of the rock for the community so they and their livestock can drink."

### Moses & Aaron's action

<sup>9</sup> So Moses **took the staff** from the LORD's presence, just as he commanded him. <sup>10</sup> He and Aaron **gathered the assembly together** in front of the rock and **Moses said to them**, "Listen, you rebels, must we bring you water out of this rock?" <sup>11</sup> Then Moses raised his arm and **struck the rock twice** with his staff. Water gushed out, and the community and their livestock drank.



## 1. Water from the rock (Numbers 20:2-13)

So everything was OK?

<sup>12</sup> But the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not **trust in me** enough to **honour me as holy** in the sight of the Israelites, **you will not bring this community into the land I give them.**"

<sup>13</sup> These were the waters of Meribah, where the Israelites quarrelled with the LORD and where he was proved holy among them.



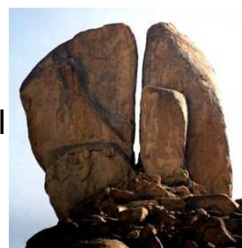
## 1. Water from the rock (Numbers 20:2-13)

- ▶ What's the problem?
- ▶ What God said:
  - Take staff, gather people, speak to rock
- ▶ What they did:
  - Took staff, gathered people, spoke to people, struck rock
- ▶ **Actions and attitudes**



## Lessons to learn

- ▶ God is holy (Kadesh)
  - We need to trust him and honour him (v12)
  - *“Be holy for I am holy”* (1 Peter 1:14–16)
  - Practical implications of holiness = obedience
- ▶ Hebrews 3–4
  - Take care ... unbelieving heart ... disobedience
  - Strive to enter
- ▶ Psalm 78
  - **Do**: hope in God, remember, obey
  - **Don't**: be stubborn, rebellious, unfaithful



## 2. Snake trouble (Numbers 21:4–9)

### Complaint (again)

<sup>4</sup> They travelled from Mount Hor along the route to the Red Sea, to go around Edom. But the people grew impatient on the way;  
<sup>5</sup> they spoke against God and against Moses, and said, “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? There is no bread! There is no water! And we detest this miserable food!”

### God's response

<sup>6</sup> Then the LORD sent **venomous snakes** among them; they bit the people and many Israelites died.



## 2. Snake trouble (Numbers 21:4-9)

### Request for help

<sup>7</sup> The people came to Moses and said, "We sinned when we spoke against the LORD and against you. Pray that the LORD will take the snakes away from us." So Moses prayed for the people.

### God's solution

<sup>8</sup> The LORD said to Moses, "**Make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live.**" <sup>9</sup> So Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. Then when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, they lived.



## 2. Snake trouble (Numbers 21:4-9)

### ► Strange solution?

- Principle of sacrifice = inversion
- Snakes in Canaanite society



## Lessons to learn

- ▶ Jesus used this event as an illustration
  - John 3:14-15 *“As Moses lifted up the snake ... so will the Son of Man be lifted up...”*
  - John 12:31-33 *“When I am lifted up I will draw all men to myself”* [he said this to show by what death he was to die]



## Final thoughts

- ▶ Numbers 20-21 = turning-point
- ▶ Disobedience brings judgement
- ▶ God is holy
- ▶ God provides salvation
- ▶ ***“Look and live”***

